

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8306
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMSCUS
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AMCONSUL/JERUSALEM 130
USINT BAGHDAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 4 ABU DHABI 2374
E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ELAB, TC
SUBJECT: QUESTIONS ON PALESTINIAN POPULATION CONCENTRATIONS LOCATED
IN MIDDLE EAST COUNTRIES.

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1. SINCE THERE IS ONLY ONE SUPERFICIAL CASE STUDY ON UAE
WORKFORCE (BY ILO) THAT WE ARE AWARE OF AND CENSUS INFORMA-
TION BY NATIONALITY OF FOREIGN INHABITANTS IS UNAVAILABLE,,
IT IS NOT POSSIBLE FOR US TO COME UP WITH PRECISE KIND OF
DETAILS REQUESTED REFTEL. WE WONDER WHETHER THEY WOULD BE
AVAILABLE EVEN IN U.S. WERE WE TRYING TO ANALYZE ANY PAR-

TICULAR GROUP THAT MAINTAINS ITS NATIONAL OR RELIGIOUS IDENTITY. RESPONSE IS FURTHER COMPLICATED FOR UAE IN THAT EACH EMIRATE HAS UP TO NOW PRETTY MUCH OPERATED ON ITS OWN IN BRINGING IN FOREIGN NATIONALS AND THERE IS NO COORDINATION ON LABOR IMPORTATION AND STILL LITTLE COORDINATION ON CONTROL OF FOREIGN NATIONALS WORKING IN UAE. MOREOVER, IN TRYING TO PREPARE AN AIRGRAM ON PALESTINIAN ROLE IN UAE, WE HAVE FOUND DISAGREEMENT AMONG MEMBERS OF PALESTINIAN COMMUNITY OVER ITS SIZE AND COMPOSITION. THUS, FOLLOWING RESPONSES KEYED TO QUESTIONS IN REFTEL BASED ON FRAGMENTARY INFORMATION AND CONTAINS ONLY VERY ROUGH ESTIMATES.

--A. ESTIMATES OF SIZE OF PALESTINIAN POPULATION IN UAE VARY FROM 20,000 TO 50,000. PROBLEM IS THAT MANY PALESTINIANS WHO RESIDE IN UAE HAVE JORDANIAN, LEBANESE, SYRIAN, OR EVEN IRAQI PASSPORTS (OFTEN THE RESULT OF HAVING MARRIED NATIONALS OF THOSE COUNTRIES) WHICH MAKES IT EXCEEDINGLY DIFFICULT TO DETERMINE NUMBER OF PALESTINIANS IN UAE. FROM BEST INFORMATION WE HAVE, BETWEEN 18,000 AND 20,000 PALESTINIANS RESIDING IN UAE HAVE PALESTINIAN TRAVEL DOCUMENTS ISSUED BY DIFFERENT ARAB COUNTRIES (EGYPT, KUWAIT, SYRIA, LEBANON, ECT.) WITH PERHAPS AN ADDITIONAL EQUAL NUMBER BEARING PASSPORTS OF ARAB STATES. OF THIS TOTAL, ABOUT 10,000 ARE BELIEVED BE SINGLE STATUS OR WORKING COUPLES WITH NO CHILDREN, WITH OTHER HALF WITH FAMILIES. BY OUR CALCULATIONS, THIS PUTS TOTAL NUMBER OF PALESTINIAN WAGE EARNER IN UAE AT ABOUT 17,500. THIS REPRESENTS ABOUT 5 PERCENT OF

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TOTAL UAE WORKFORCE. BIRTH RATE AMONG PALESTINIANS WHO HAVE FAMILIES IS ESTIMATED AT 2.5 PERCENT OR SOMEWHAT LOWER THAN INDIGENOUS POPULATION (CURRENTLY ESTIMATED AT JUST OVER 3 PERCENT). VIRTUALLY ALL PALESTINIANS OF WORKING AGE ARE EMPLOYED.

--B. PREVAILING CHARACTERISTIC OF PALESTINIAN WORKER IS AN INDIVIDUAL WITH A RELATIVELY HIGH LEVEL OF SKILLS. HE MAY BE A TEACHER, A PROFESSIONAL MAN (DOCTOR, DENTIST, BANKER, ACCOUNTANT, LAWYER, JUDGE); A TECHNICIAN WORKING WITH ONE OF THE OIL COMPANIES; A CIVIL SERVANT WORKING IN THE MIDDLE TO UPPER ECHELONS OF FEDERAL UAE OR LOCAL EMIRIAN GOVERNMENTS (E.G., 8 PERCENT OF THE 12,265 EMPLOYEES OF THE ABU DHABI EMIRATE ARE PALESTINIANS); OR A PARTNER WITH A LOCAL EMIRIAN IN A BUSINESS SUCH AS CONSTRUCTION, REAL ESTATE, OR MEDIUM TO LARGE RETAIL OUTLET. THERE ARE ALSO PALESTINIANS WHO WORK AS CLERKS, GARAGE MECHANICS, PILE DRIVERS, ELECTRICIANS, WELDERS, ETC., BUT THEIR NUMBER IS RELATIVELY SMALL SINCE THESE OCCUPATIONS ARE INCREASINGLY BEING TAKEN OVER BY INDIANS, PAKISTANIS, AND OTHER SOUTH ASIANS WHO PROVIDE MOST OF THE LOWER STRATA LABOR FORCE IN THE UAE AND WHERE A GOOD KNOWLEDGE OF ARABIC IS NOT ESSENTIAL.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 4 ABU DHABI 2374

WE WOULD GUESS THAT ABOUT ONE HALF OF PALESTINIANS RESIDING
IN UAE ARE EMPLOYED IN PUBLIC SECTOR (MAINLY AS TEACHERS,
WITH MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, AS CIVIL SERVANTS IN FEDERAL OR
EMIRI GOVERNMENTS, AS TECHNICIANS WITH ABU DHABI NATIONAL
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OIL COMPANY) AND OTHER HALF IN PRIVATE SECTOR. THEIR AVERAGE AGE WOULD BE IN MID-30'S AND THEIR AVERAGE EARNINGS PER PRINCIPAL WOULD BE ABOUT \$13,000 PER ANNUM. MAJORITY OF PALESTINIANS ARE BELIEVED TO RESIDE IN EMIRATE OF ABU DHABI WHICH IS LARGEST, WEALTHIEST, AND MOST IN NEED OF SKILLED SERVICES REQUIRING KNOWLEDGE OF ARABIC. MANY PALESTINIANS CAME TO ABU DHABI IN LATE 1960'S AS SHAIKH ZAYID BEGAN SPENDING OIL REVENUE FOR DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS AND BUILDING UP EDUCATIONAL, HEALTH, AND SOCIAL SERVICE INFRASTRUCTURE. SECOND WAVE OF PALESTINIANS CAME IN LATE 1973 AS RESULT OF OCTOBER WAR, AND THIRD WAVE IN 1975/76 AS RESULT OF EVENTS IN LEBANON.

EMPLOYERS OF PALESTINIANS (GOVERNMENT OR PRIVATE) ARE REQUIRED TO DEDUCT 5 PERCENT OF SALARY WHICH IS TURNED OVER TO PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION. AS NEARLY HALF OF PALESTINIANS IN UAE WITH PALESTINIAN TRAVEL DOCUMENTS ARE WITHOUT THEIR FAMILIES OR RELATIVES, IT BELIEVED THAT THIS GROUP REMITS A PORTION OF THEIR WAGES (PERHAPS 25 PERCENT INCLUDING AUTOMATIC DEDUCTION) TO RELATIVES WHEREVER THEY MAY BE. THOSE PALESTINIANS WITH ARAB PASSPORTS TEND TO IDENTIFY LESS WITH PALESTINE AND IT IS BELIEVED THEIR REMITTANCES TO RELATIVES ARE SMALLER (PERHAPS 10 PERCENT OF WAGES). IF THESE ASSUMPTIONS ARE CLOSE TO MARK, WE CALCULATE THAT REMITTANCES FROM PALESTINIANS WORKING IN UAE ARE CLOSE TO \$50 MILLION A YEAR.

--C. THERE HAVE BEEN NO SIGNIFICANT EMPLOYMENT TRENDS SINCE 1973 AFFECTING PALESTINIANS OTHER THAN THE GROWING NEED FOR TEACHERS AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES REQUIRING A KNOWLEDGE OF ARABIC. MOST PALESTINIANS WHO CAME TO UAE AFTER OCTOBER 1973 WAR HAVE RENEWED THEIR WORK PERMITS AND REMAIN AS RESIDENTS. AS EDUCATIONAL AND GOVERNMENTAL INFRASTRUCTURE HAS EXPANDED AND NEW TEACHERS AND CIVIL SERVANTS HAVE BEEN

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HIRED, PALESTINIANS HAVE FOUND NEW EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES. THIS IS PARTICULARLY NOTICEABLE IN THE RAPIDLY EXPANDING SECONDARY SCHOOL SYSTEM. HOWEVER, NOW THAT ECONOMIC BOOM HAS TAPERED OFF, WITH EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL FACILITIES INCREASINGLY AVAILABLE FOR ALL NATIVE AND FOREIGN INHABITANTS, WITH GOVERNMENT MEASURES TO HOLD DOWN SIZE OF FEDERAL AND EMIRI GOVERNMENT BUREAUCRACY, AND WITH SCALING DOWN OF NEW INDUSTRIAL PROJECTS BECAUSE OF GOVERNMENT CONCERNS OVER THE SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF HOSTING A LARGE EXPATRIATE POPULATION, NEW EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR PALESTINIANS SHOULD BEGIN TO DECLINE IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS.

--D. PALESTINIAN WORKERS IN UAE ENCOUNTER SAME LEGAL AND SOCIAL RESTRICTIONS ENCOUNTERED BY OTHER FOREIGN WORKERS. MOST PALESTINIANS LIVING IN UAE HAVE RESIDENT WORK VISAS WHICH MUST BE RENEWED. EXCEPT IN SPECIAL CASES, PERSONS

OF PALESTINIAN ORIGIN AND THEIR FAMILIES HAVE NOT BEEN ACCORDED UAE CITIZENSHIP. CHILDREN BORN IN THE UAE TO PALESTINIAN PARENTS DO NOT GAIN UAE CITIZENSHIP BUT KEEP CITIZENSHIP OF THEIR PARENTS. SAME RESTRICTIONS APPLIES TO NATIONALS OF OTHER COUNTRIES AS WELL. ARAB OR NON-ARAB. CITIZENSHIP AND NATURALIZATION LAWS CONTINUE TO BE SUBJECT OF CONSIDERABLE DEBATE WITHIN UAE AND IS POLITICALLY TOUCHY SUBJECT BECAUSE NATIVE INHABITANTS PROBABLY LESS THAN 20 PERCENT OF PRESENT 865,000 UAE POPULATIONS.

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FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 3 OF 4 ABU DHABI 2374

--E. BECAUSE OF CONSCIOUS DECISION BY UAE GOVERNMENT AND

WEALTHY EMIRATES WITHIN UAE TO UNDERTAKE CRASH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS, UAE HAS BEEN SOURCE OF EMPLOYMENT FOR MANY OUTSIDERS IN RECENT YEARS. WHILE LABORERS FOR MENIAL TYPE OCCUPATIONS WILL CONTINUE TO BE NEEDED OVER THE NEXT TWO
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DECADES, NEW EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR SKILLS NOW FILLED BY MANY PALESTINIANS ARE LIKELY TO DECLINE FOR REASONS CITED
PARA :. HIGHER LEVEL CIVIL SERVICE POSITIONS, NOW HELD ALMOST ENTIRELY BY ARAB EXPATRIATES, MANY OF WHOM ARE PALESTINIANS, WILL SLOWLY BE TAKEN OVER IN NEXT FIVE TO TEN YEARS BY YOUNGER EMIRIANS RETURNING FROM THEIR UNIVERSITY EDUCATION ABROAD. SAME DEVELOPMENT IS LIKELY TO HAPPEN IN PRIVATE SECTOR AS EDUCATED SONS OF MERCHANT CLASS TAKE OVER MANAGERIAL AND SUB-MANAGERIAL SLOTS NOW FILLED BY PALESTINIANS. AT LOWER LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT SERVICE, PARTICULARLY IN FIELD OF EDUCATION. EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES WILL ALSO PROBABLY REMAIN IN PROFESSIONAL FIELDS (DOCTORS, LAWYERS, ACCOUNTANTS, ECT.) WHERE A GOOD KNOWLEDGE OF ARABIC IS REQUIRED AND WHICH CANNOT BE FILLED BY UAE NATIONALS IN FORSEEABLE FUTURE. BUT IN THOSE OCCUPATIONS WHERE SALARY LEVELS HAVE BEEN THE HIGHEST, WE CAN EXPECT THAT AN INCREASING NUMBER OF THE MOST EDUCATED AND EXPERIENCED PALESTINIANS WILL BEGIN TO SEEK EMPLOYMENT IN THE US OR EUROPE WHEN LOCAL EMIRIANS TAKE OVER.

--F. MANY UAE NATIONALS HAVE INDICATED CONCERN THAT PALESTINIANS RESIDING IN UAE WOULD SEEK UNDERMINE LOOSE CONFEDERATION. THIS FEAR PARTICULARLY PREVALENT LAST FALL WITH DEATH OF UAE MINISTER OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS GHUBBASH BY ASSASSIN WHO TRYING KILL VISITING SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM, BY LUFTHANSA HIJACKING, AND BOMBING OF EGYPTIAN TRAVEL AGENCY IN SHARJAH. THESE CONCERNS LED TO TIGHTENING UP OF VISA REQUIREMENTS AND ARREST OF SEVERAL PALESTINIANS IMPLICATED IN SHARAJAH BOMBING AND WHO ALSO WERE FOUND TO HAVE ARM CACHES. ALTHOUGH THEY WERE SUBSEQUENTLY DEPORTED, AFTER PLO GAVE ASSURANCE TO UAE IT WOULD NOT HAPPEN AGAIN, UAE OFFICIALS REMAIN CONCERNED LEST PALESTINIANS DECIDE MAKE UAE BASE OF OPERATIONS AS IN LEBANON. THERE IS AS YET NO STRONG
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FEELING THAT PALESTINIANS ARE FILLING JOBS THAT SHOULD GO TO NATIONALS, BUT THIS WILL CHANGE ONCE THE 1,500 OR SO UAE NATIONALS WHO ARE NOW RECEIVING UNIVERSITY LEVEL EDUCATION ABROAD BEGIN TO RETURN.

--G. EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES ARE OPEN TO ALL PALESTINIANS

AT PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS. IN SOME CASES THAT WE AWARE OF, USE HAS ALSO PROVIDED SCHOLARSHIPS TO PALESTINIANS FOR EDUCATION AT UNIVERSITY LEVEL WITH EMPHASIS ON FLEDGLING UAE UNIVERSITY THATM OPENED IN 1977. MOST SCHOLARSHIP AID TO FOREIGN UNIVERSITIES (PARTICULARLY U.S.) HAS BEEN RESERVED FOR NATIVE INHABITANTS; HOWEVER, VIRTUALLY EVERY SCHOOL-AGE CHLD OF PALESTINIAN FAMILY RESIDING IN UAE ATTENDS SCHOOL INCLUDING HIGH SCHOOL. THOSE PALESTINIAN FAMILIES WHO CAN AFFORD IT HAVE SENT THEIR CHILDREN FOR UNIVERSITY STUDY ABROAD, WITH US AS FIRST PREFERENCE, FOLLOWED BY UK AND THEN BY ARAB UNIVERSITIES. SINCE SUCH LARGE NUMBER OF PALESTINIANS RESIDING HERE HAVE FAIR DEGREE OF EDUCATION, THEY TEND TO BE MORE WESTERN AND US-ORIENTED THAN OTHER ARAB EXPARTIATES.

--H. THERE ARE NO PLANS THAT WE AWARE OF WITHIN UAEG TO SPECIFICALLY RESTRICT OR CONTAIN NUMBER OF PALESTINIANS WORKING IN UAE. HOWEVER, IN LIGHT OF TIGHTENED VISA RESTRICTIONS SINCE END OF 1977 COUPLED WITH FACT THAT ECONOMIC BOOM IN UAE HAS LEVEDED OFF, UAE NO LONGER AS ATTRACTIVE AS BEFOR FOR PALESTINIANS LOOKING FOR WORK. WHILE WE DO NOT SEE ANY SIGNIFICANT OUTFLOW OVER NEXT FIVE YEARS, NEITHER DO WE SEE ANY SIGNIFICANT INFLOW.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 4 OF 4 ABU DHABI 2374

--I. PRINCIPAL INCENTIVE FOR PALESTINIANS WORKING IN UAE
HAS BEEN HIGH SALARIES AVAILABLE IN THIS SKILL-SHORT
ECONOMY AS WELL AS RELATIVE OPENNESS OF THE ECONOMY.
WEALTHY PALESTINIANS HAVE PURCHASED LAND (AS HAVE OTHER
NON-NATIONALS) IN EIMRATES OF SHARJAH, RAS AL KHAIMAH AND
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AJMAN. HOWEVER, THEY SEE PROPOSED LEGISLATION TO RESTRICT
LAND OWNERSHIP TO NATIONALS AND TO REQUIRE THAT ANY BUSINESS
VENTURE IN UAE HAVE AT LEAST 51 PERCENT LOCAL PARTICIPATION
(BOTH MOVES BEING OPPOSED BY THE POORER EMIRATES) AS
HANDWRITING ON WALL. THEY FEAR THAT SLOWLY-GROWING
NATIONALISTIC BUSINESS ATMOSPHERE WILL SLOWLY PUSH THEM OUT
AND MAKE UAE LESS ATTRACTIVE. AS RESULT, WEALTHY PALESTINIANS
HAVE BEGUN TO BUY APARTMENTS, LAND OR OTHER TYPE EQUITY
INVESTMENT IN WESTERN EUROPE AND, THROUGH BROKERS, IN THE
US. CLEARLY, IF PERMITTED TO DO SO, THEY WOULD ALSO TRY TO
BUY LAND IN WEST BANK OR GAZA NOT BECAUSE THEY PLANNED TO
RETURN BUT AS A SIGN OF THEIR EMOTIONAL ATTACHEMNT AND FOR
ASSIGNATION TO LESS WELL-OFF RELATIVES STILL RESIDING THERE
OR IN JORDAN/SYRIA/LEBANON.

--J. NOT APPLICABLE.

--K. CHANCES FOR PALESTINIAN ASSIMILATION INTO UAE LOCAL
SOCIETY ARE PROBABLY NOT GOOD. ALTHOUGH PALESTINIAN
POPULATION IN UAE IS PERHAPS POLITICALLY MOST COHESIVE
GROUP IN UAE AND HAS SHOWN DETERMINATION AND FINESSE IN
EXERCISING INFLUENCE IN INFORMATION MEDIAN AND IN EDUCATION,
EFFECT HAS BEEN TO RAISE LEVEL OF AWARENESS AMONG EMIRIANS
OF PALESTINE PROBLEM BUT NOT TO INTEGRATE PALESTINIANS INTO UAE
SOCIETY. THERE HAS BEEN VIRTUALLY NO INTERMARRIAGE AND

NEW CITIZENSHIP LAW UNLIKELY TO BE PROMULAGTED UNTIL
FURTHER INTERNAL POLITICAL INTEGRATION OCCURS WITHIN
THE UAE. EVEN IN EVENT OF MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT, IT UNLIKELY
THAT THIS DEVELOPMENT WOULD FAVOR PALESTINIANS SEEKING UAE CITIZENSHI

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